

CHILD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE SOCIETY: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This paper examines child domestic violence in the society. It is no longer news that a lot of children had experienced and still experiencing child domestic violence or abuse in one form or the other. Forms of domestic violence which include physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse or emotional abuse and psychological abuse. The article views the different causes of child domestic violence like social stress, intergenerational transmission of violence, social isolation and community involvement and family structure. Whereas, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), result in death, low self-esteem, stress disorders, anxiety, depression, sexual transmitted infection, unwanted pregnancy, and educational difficulty are all effects of child domestic violence. Preventive measures are also taken to reduce the rate of child domestic violent. The related theory used was reframing theory, which simply means changing the interpretation of a behaviour or situation to alter its perceived meaning. Conclusively, the counsellors, educational psychologists and other relevant agencies carry out constant workshop to sensitize parents, guardians, and teachers. So as to be aware of the implication of child domestic violence and promptly report any related abuse to the appropriate authority.

Keywords: Child Domestic Violence.

Introduction

Child domestic violence involves all forms of child abuse and neglect. It is an abuse of different types that occurs when a child is being maltreated by the parents or guardians. These categories of abuse include physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Alternatively, neglect involves actions that a parent or guardian refuses to do for the

child, like failing to provide basic necessities of life. Generally, domestic violence is an abusive way of behaviour that happens between adults in the presence of a child within the same household. In the same token, it is believed to be a situation usually occurs between a man and woman in relationship. Child domestic violence can be committed by parents or guidance, members of extended family, siblings, and domestic partners. It's important to recognize that child domestic can have serious and long-lasting effects on a child's emotional, physical, mental, and psychological well-being. A child's exposure to adult domestic violence has increasingly become a concern for counsellors, which is why this paper is written.

Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence or abuse are two terms that can be used interchangeably and they carry the same meaning in this study. According to Jacob Stapledon. (2023), domestic violence is pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour that one person uses over another to gain power and control. Domestic violence may include verbal abuse, emotional/mental/psychological abuse, physical abuse financial abuse, and sexual abuse. Each of these can be experienced separately, there is considerably overlapping among these forms of abuse where two or more are commonly experienced among children or adolescent.

Concept of Child Domestic Violence

According to United children education fund (UNICEF 2020) assert that domestic violence or abuse in children can also refers to as child labour. This is a situation where children are given work that are too much to perform or that by its nature or circumstances can be hazardous. Witnessing domestic violence is a life threatening experience that creates a sense of vulnerability, hopelessness, psychological disorders and emotional threats among children resulting in negative academic capabilities (Kanchiputu and Mwale, 2016)

Forms of Child Domestic Violence

1. *Physical Abuse:* It is defined as physical injury that results in meaning harm to a child. There are indicators that can show that physical abuse has occurred with multiple bruises that are at various phases of healing, such as injuries on the body that are usually covered by clothing, such as scrapes on the kneels of a newborn, speechless injuries that are abnormal with the child's age, and injuries on the thighs and chest. Physical abuse is one of the commonest forms of abuse (Oluremi, 2015). Other factors that should be looked into are location of the injury, injury pattern, child's age, and proposed clarifications of injuries.
2. *Sexual Abuse:* It is a forceful act of having sex with an individual (male or female) particularly a child, which is within our context. According to the state of Texas' panel code, sexual abuse is defined as "sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of a young child, indecency with a child, sexual assault, or aggravated

assault” (Egeland & Sroufe, 1981). If care is not taken to avoid sexual conduct hurtful to a child, encouraging a child to be involved in sexual acts, such as prostitution or hook-up as it is called these days, and also pornography are all embedded within the Texas definition of sexual abuse. Pointers of sexual abuse include physical and behavioural manifestations like having difficulty sitting or walking, sexually acting out, and pregnancy.

3. *Emotional Abuse:* It is mental or emotional harm done to a child that results in observable impairment in child’s development, growth, or psychological functioning. Emotional abuse is an instrument used by those who want to make children feel scared and worthless. For example, belittling a child in a public setting, threatening a child constantly, limiting physical contact, making jokes about a child, etc. The aftereffects of emotional abuse can be detrimental on the long run. The indicators of emotional abuse are depression, poor self-esteem, substance abuse, and aggressively acting out. The symptoms are different for boys and girls. Girls who are going through emotional abuse may be more depressed compared to boys who may act out with destructive behavior.
4. *Psychological Abuse:* It is a behaviour that intends to cause mental and emotional harm. It’s painful and distressing. It involves someone doing or saying things to make you feel bad. People’s behaviour that aims to make you scared or feel bad about yourself. Psychological abuse can include restricting a child’s movements, denigration, ridicule, threats and intimidation, discrimination and other non-forms of hostile treatment viz: calling you names; ignoring you or pretending you aren’t existing, threatening to harm you, your children, and close relations, embarrassing you in front of family, friends, and people you work with; and treating you badly because of things you can’t change, e.g. race, religion, gender, family etc. (Hillis, Mercy, Amobi, & Kress, 2016).
5. *Neglect:* It is the most common form of child abuse. It involves inadequate or lack of provision of basic needs such as clothing, food, shelter, education, health care, and protection from hazards in the environment. Research has shown that severe neglect disrupt the ways in which children’s brains develop and process information, increasing the risk for cognitive, emotional, attentional, and behavioural disorder. According to social learning theory, parents and caregivers who abuse or neglect their children do so because they experienced or witnessed abuse or neglect at the young age (Daigle and Muftic, 2016). Some factors that increase the risk of child neglect are parents who are young or single-parenting, have experienced child neglect themselves, or have family or personal stress. There are various types of neglects but for the purpose of this study the researchers focus on three neglects which are the most common form of child abuse namely emotional neglect, physical neglect, and educational neglect.

Emotional neglect: involves a caregiver's inattention to the child emotional needs.

Physical neglect: includes abandonment, ignoring a child welfare example driving intoxicated with a child.

Educational neglect: encompasses failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs.

Causes of Child Domestic Violence

The following are the causes of child domestic violence according to Bandura, (1977) and Akers (1973);

1. **Social Stress:** Limited social and relationship skills may result to social stress. How a child relates with parents who are abusive is restricted because of the frequent abuse he or she might have witnessed. There are pointers shown by such a child which include not having enough friends, not being able to keep up with friends' one particular area or another. Interpersonal conflicts, and peer pressure. Stress brought on by different social conditions increases the risk of child abuse within the family. These conditions are: unemployment, poor housing condition, sickness, disabled person in the home, the death of a family member. A large number of reported cases of child abuse is indicated in families living in abject poverty. It also happens in middle class and wealthy families, but it is better reported among the poor for many reasons. The affluent families have an easier time to hide abuse because have less contact with social agencies than poor families. Drug use and alcohol are rampant among abusive parents, which may aggravate stress and cause violent behavior.
2. **Intergenerational Transmission of Violence:** A child witnessing parental abuse in any form will most likely exhibit the same behavior. Children learn by modelling or observation and besides, the child's reaction is consequent upon what he or she is constantly seeing. Social learning theory is based on idea that an individual learn through modeling, observation and cognitive processes (Bandura,1977) More so according to social learning theory crime and criminal behavior is learned (Akers, 1973). In other words, children who are exposed to violence in childhood see violence as acceptable behavior. Many children learn violent behavior from their parents and grow up to abuse their own children. Thus, the abusive behavior is spread across generations. Studies show that 30% of abused children become abusive parents. Such children who experienced violence and abuse may embrace this behavior as a model for their parenting.

Nevertheless, most of abused children do not become abusive adults. Some experts postulated that an important indicator of later abuse is whether the child realizes that the behavior was bad. Children who believed they behaved badly and deserved the abuse become abusive parents more often than children who believe their parents were wrong to abuse them.

3. **Social Isolation and Community Development:** A child whose parents are always at loggerhead will naturally go into isolation at any slightest opportunity. Such a child if not properly tamed with care and empathy to correct the low self-esteem would withdraw from family, friends, and the entire community. So also, parents and guidance who abuse children have a tendency to be socially isolated. Hardly would violent parents belong to any community organization and most have little or no contact with friends and extended families. This lackadaisical attitudinal behavior social involvement in the community deprives abusive parents to support system that will help them deal better with social and family stress. More so, the lack of community contacts makes these parents less likely to change their behavior to be in harmony with the community values and standards. In cultures with low rates of child abuse, child care is often considered the responsibility of the community. These include, relatives, friends, neighbors, and relatives assist with child care when the parents are unavailable.
4. **Family Structure:** Some families have an increased risk of child abuse. The degree of damage done to a child in various families differ. For example, a child from a broken home whose structure is already broken, such a child is more damaged emotionally, mentally, and psychologically, than a child whose parents are still together despite their individual differences and constant domestic violence. However, when a family relationship becomes toxic and life threatening, it is best to part ways. Another example is a child who is sexually abused. The thought of suicide and depression is peculiar to them. Single-parents families usually earn less money than other families. This may account for the increased risk of abuse, which is why the writers have come up with reframing theory in a latter page as a way of helping a child who has been abused in any form.

The Effects of Child Domestic Violence

The consequent effects of child domestic violence can be devastating. These include post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety, depression, sexual transmitted infections (STIs), low self-esteem, unwanted pregnancy, educational difficulty, etc. According to Hillis, Mercy, Amobi and Kress (2016), listed the following as effect of child domestic violence.

1. **Result in death:** Homicide, which often involved weapon such as knives and firearms, is among the top four causes of death in adolescents.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A child who experienced traumatic event during while growing up is prone to have PTSD. Such event could be an accident, natural disaster, witnessing domestic violence, loss of loved ones, etc. A child with PTSD may exhibits symptoms like: regressive behaviors (bed wetting, thumb-sucking), mood swings, psychosomatic illnesses (headaches, stomachached), nightmares, isolation etc.
3. **Stress Disorders:** Stress disorders in a child can manifest differently than in adult. These are the common types of stress disorders: anxiety disorder, adjustment disorder, reactive attachment disorder (RAD), post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD).

4. **Anxiety:** Intense and constant worry and fear about everyday situations or events. It is characterized by rapid heartbeat, excessive worry, difficulty concentrating attention etc.
5. **Depression:** Depression in children can be difficult to notice, they may not show their feelings like adults do. Here are some symptoms to look out for: constant sadness, loss of interest in any activity, fatigue, suicide thoughts, withdrawal from friends and family, etc.
6. **Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs):** These are sexual diseases or infections that can be transmitted through sexual contact with an infected person. This includes gonorrhoea, syphilis, hepatitis B & C, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), chlamydia, scabies, etc. Some of the symptoms are: skin rashes, itching or burning sensation, painful urination or intercourse, abnormal discharge, etc. These are very dangerous diseases if left untreated, it can lead to dangerous health complications, such as: damaged organ, infertility, and cancer. It is best to prevent the occurrence of such diseases by getting tested regularly, abstinence, a child should report any sexual harassment by anybody to his or parents or guidance (communication).
7. **Low Self-Esteem:** It is a child's self-limiting belief of not good enough compared to other children and think of times he or she failed more often than when succeed. It's a child's self-criticism and doubt that he or she can do things well, which leads to lack of confidence, negative self-talk, lack of motivation, avoid challenges, difficulty setting boundaries, etc.
8. **Unwanted Pregnancy:** Adolescents, teenagers, or young adults are naïve, young, and innocent. Their development must be understood by parents or guidance under the same roof, so as to protect them from teenagers of opposite sex and other adults. If adequate attention is not given as at when due and an adolescent fell prey of illicit sexual contact, it may result to unwanted pregnancy.
9. **Educational Difficulty:** No child experiencing domestic violence has a sound mind. Of all the three domains of education (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), once the affective – emotional domain is affected, learning can never takes place. Consequently, such a child academic performance has nothing to write home about.

Reframing Theory

Reframing theory it is a counselling technique that is popular and widely used and acceptable by guidance counselors, clinical social worker, psychologist, psychiatrists, and other professional helpers (Rodriguez, 2014). In other words, cognitive reframing is a method that encourage client to identify dysfunctional set thoughts and believes relating to their problems, and to challenge the validity of those distorted thought in other to produce and used more adaptive alternatives. The goal of CRT is to increase client autonomy and self-efficacy (Sperry,

2003)

Cognitive reframing theory is used to redirect the mindset so that one is able to look at a person, situation, or relationship from a different point of view. Reframing is something you can do at home or anytime you experienced unattractive thinking. It can sometimes be helpful to have a counsellor, particularly if a child is caught in a negative thought pattern as a result of domestic violence. When the technique is used in a therapeutic setting by a counsellor, it is known as cognitive restructuring.

The important idea behind reframing is that the frame through which a person perceive a situation determine their point of view. When that frame is redirected, the meaning changes, and thinking and behavior often change along with it. Also, to understand the concept of reframing is to imagine viewing through a camera lens. The picture seen through the lens can be changed to a view that is closer or further away. By gently changing what is seen in the camera, the picture is both viewed and experienced differently.

Cognitive reframing is the most appropriate technique for sexually abused child, a child of broken-home, and other children who must have witnessed domestic violence. After any medical attention that may be required in case of wound or rape. It is important not to limit the child to medical care alone. The counsellor would take such victim through a specific proven practical steps that work effectively. Counselling can serve as preventive, mediative, and rehabilitative against child domestic violence.

Prevention of Child Domestic Violent

1. Implementation and enforcement of laws (e.g. banning violent discipline and restricting access to alcohol and firearms).
2. Norms and values change (e.g. altering norms that condone the sexual abuse of girls or aggressive behavior among boys)
3. Parental and caregiver support (for e.g. providing parent training to young, first time parents)
4. Income and economic strengthening (such as micro finance and gender equity training)
5. Response services provision (e.g. ensuring the children are exposed to violence can access effective emergency care and receives appropriate psycho-social support)
6. Save environment (such as identifying neighborhood hotspot for violence and then addresses the local causes through problem oriented policing and other interventions).
7. Education and live skills (such as ensuring that children attend school and providing lives and social skills).

Conclusion

Child domestic violence in all forms is not an acceptable behaviour, as a matter of fact, it is an incompetent behavioural response from parents, guardians, society and institutions. It is an

anti-social behaviour that can be corrected with reframing theory. Furthermore Counsellors, Psychologists, Social Workers, Religious Institutions, Government and Non-Governmental Organization such as Human Right Commission (HRC), United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF), Society For Family Health (SFFH), National Agency For The Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP). The aforementioned can be more helpful in sensitizing parents, guidance, communities, and schools through workshops, seminars, and advocacies against child domestic violence at home, school, society and institutions.

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